

Evaluation of a Complex, Multisite, Multilevel Grants Initiative

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Abstract

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) national evaluation seeks to assess both the implementation process and the results of the SS/HS Initiative, exploring factors that have contributed to or detracted from grantee success. Each site is required to forge partnerships with representatives from education, mental health, juvenile justice, and law enforcement, coordinating and integrating their efforts and working together to contribute to comparable outcomes (e.g., reduced violence and alcohol and drug use, improved mental health services).

The evaluation uses multiple data collection techniques (archival data, surveys, site visits, interviews, and focus groups) from a variety of sources (project directors, community partners, schools, and students) over several years. Certain characteristics of the SS/HS Initiative represent unique challenges for the evaluation, including the absence of common metrics for baseline, outcome data, and lack of comparison group. A unifying program theory was required to address these challenges and synthesize the large amounts of qualitative and quantitative information collected. This article stresses the role of program theory in guiding the evaluation.

Keywords: Program theory, Program evaluation, School-community partnerships

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1. Introduction

The goal of the SS/HS Initiative is to foster integrated systems that create safe and respectful school climates and, consequently, promote the mental health of students and prevent violence and substance abuse. Toward this end, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students(SS/HS) Initiative provides funding to local education agencies (LEAs). These LEAs are charged to work in partnership with local law enforcement, juvenile justice agencies, social service and mental health agencies, and other community organizations to develop and implement comprehensive SS/HS plans to achieve the program goal. It is expected that in implementing their comprehensive plans, SS/HS grantees will transform their service delivery systems and create an integrated network of activities, programs, services, and policies that:

- Promote the healthy development of social and emotional skills in early childhood.
- Enhance prosocial behaviors to prevent violent behavior and drug use.
- Increase availability of mental health services.
- Reduce incidents of violent behavior and drug use.
- Create schools and communities that are safe, disciplined, and drug free.
- Engage parents, community organizations, faith-based groups, and other agencies.
- Develop an infrastructure that is institutionalized and sustained after the federal funding ends.

Among federal government programs for school-aged youth, the SS/HS Initiative is unique in applying a collaborative approach to intervention and service delivery for this population. Like many public sector and nonprofit initiatives, the SS/HS Initiative encourages

use of best practices and evidence-based programs while promoting changes in the service delivery system. However, the SS/HS grants are also meant to counter the effects of funding and organizational “silos.” By requiring multiple providers at each site to collaborate on improving the systems that serve school-aged youth, Congress and the sponsoring federal agencies (the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice) anticipate that SS/HS grantees are more likely to achieve improvement in overall school climate and, consequently, contribute to a variety of individual-level outcomes among school-aged youth.

The SS/HS Initiative’s focus on creating a safe and respectful school climate as a foundation for promoting the mental health of students and preventing violence and substance abuse is derived from decades of observations of the effect of school climate on student outcomes. Freiberg and Stein (1999) described school climate as “the heart and soul of a school ... that quality of a school that helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity, and importance while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves” (p.11). The effects of school climate on youth outcomes have been systematically documented since the 1980s. These observations began with recognition that overall school climate appeared to have a decisive impact on the attainment of academic achievement (Anderson, 1982; West, 1985; Gregory & Smith, 1987); an often-cited U.S. Department of Education study based on data from over 600 secondary schools identified the association of school climate with behavioral problems and dropout rates (Gottfredsen & Gottfredsen, 1989). This association has been confirmed in recent years with increasingly large and diverse data sets, both in the United States and abroad (cf., Portes & Hao, 2004; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, & Astor, 2005). Findings from this research should not lead to the conclusion that low academic achievement, substance abuse, violence, and mental health problems are generated by school climate.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that, in the long term, the efficacy of efforts to address these issues are strongly influenced by school climate.

Fostering effective interventions within the context of improved overall school climate has been recognized as a challenge for two reasons. First, there has been a lack of consensus on the precise definition of “school climate” and the components of measures that assess school climate as a variable (Anderson 1982). Second, the coordination required to influence overall school climate has been frustrated by the tendency of school-related expertise to be compartmentalized within specific professional fields. For example, innovations in instructional techniques that influence school climate are developed and championed among the teaching community, while innovations in school structure and organization that also influence school climate tend to be developed and championed among experts in educational administration; the specialization and alternative educational patterns of these two groups of professionals tends to create a lack of communication and shared governance (Monk, 2008). The situation is aggravated by the involvement of additional professionals who also influence school climate, such as law enforcement and juvenile justice specialists addressing crime and violence, mental health professionals addressing emotional and mental health issues, and substance abuse specialists addressing alcohol and drug concerns. This complex of youth-related expertise is divided organizationally and fiscally at the local, state, and national levels among agencies with distinct missions and responsibilities, generating separate and parallel planning and funding silos.

Nearly three decades ago, Jessor and Jessor (1977) criticized the “silo” approach to interventions that causes financial and programmatic support to target specific behaviors such as adolescent substance use and abuse, early aggression and violent behavior, and sexual

experimentation. Within the context of their Problem Behavior Theory, Jessor and Jessor advocated that more attention and programmatic effort be paid to a wider array of highly interconnected problem behaviors in children and youth. Although researchers and practitioners subsequently developed prevention and intervention models that incorporate this perspective, few have made a determined effort to replace the “silo” model of service planning and delivery with a more collaborative structure. Positive Behavioral Support, for example, an alternative paradigm to addressing multiple problem behaviors, nevertheless emphasizes changes within the school structure and assumes that service delivery among other providers will be integrated for individual high-risk youth (cf., Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; McIntosh, Chard, Boland, & Homer, 2006).

Whelage and White (1995) challenged approaches that place priority on making services “respond more efficiently or effectively to individual clients or customers.” They claimed such reforms inhibit the formation of “social capital” within a service community. Whelage and White argued that in a true collaboration, the service planning and providing agencies should have a separate form of governance that expands social capital to most effectively use available resources for the benefit of the entire community, rather than specific individuals. According to Whelage and White, “In organizing themselves toward common purposes, people use communications networks and draw upon the trust that has been established within networks. ... Trust and reliable communication networks serve as the glue that holds people together to allow them to use human and financial capital” (p. 3).

2. Program Theory Model and the National SS/HS Initiative Evaluation

The goal of the national cross-site evaluation of the SS/HS Initiative is to assess the process and effectiveness of the Initiative in improving outcomes and to develop understanding

of implementation factors (i.e., process) that contribute to those improved outcomes. Yet several features of the SS/HS Initiative combine to limit evaluation design options and contraindicate the use of an experimental or quasi-experimental design for the national evaluation. Most grant programs provide a single type of intervention associated with a limited set of identified outcomes. In contrast, the scope of each local SS/HS initiative is multifaceted and complex, and the Initiative itself has expanded across many school districts in need of services. As a result, the specific mix of interventions encouraged by the Initiative at each site differs due to environmental context. Locating comparable sites, while theoretically possible, would be challenging. Additionally, the costs of data collection among comparison sites would be enormous, including extensive measurement of outcomes and process as well as incentives for comparison sites to participate.

As an alternative to an experimental or quasi-experimental design, the SS/HS Initiative bases its evaluation on a program theory model. Theory-driven approaches focus on presenting factors or constructs hypothesized to influence program outcomes in a model, collecting relevant data, and examining the model's hypothesized relationships in relation to evaluation findings (Sidani & Sechrest, 1999). Program theory is able to take into account the complexities of a social program, such as SS/HS, and more precisely frame the evaluation (House, 2001). Thus, the articulation of the underlying program theory, including its mediating variables, serves as the foundation for both the initiative's operation and for its evaluation (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). The program theory for the SS/HS Initiative (Figure 1) was developed in consultation with federal program staff and through reviews of the literature in the field. This model has been refined over the past five years and is intended to reflect the grant's change process.

FIGURE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

The attributes of the program theory model are grounded in an understanding of the Initiative's unique approach to changing how communities plan and implement youth-related services. The model identifies aspects of the *pre-grant-environment*—community characteristics and resources, as well as degree of interagency collaboration at the time of grant award—and describes and catalogues the activities associated with these existing conditions and resources. Upon receipt of the SS/HS grant award, SS/HS partners are expected to collaborate in every phase of the program including (a) conducting a comprehensive needs assessment; (b) developing program objectives and a comprehensive plan for meeting those objectives; (c) selecting evidence-based strategies to address needs and achieve desired outcomes; and (d) overseeing program implementation, management, and evaluation. The program model suggests that the ability of SS/HS partnerships to operate effectively is influenced by how the partnership is structured and how the partnership functions. The model assumes that the operations of the SS/HS program (*grant operations*) will in turn determine the quality of the programs, services, and policies implemented within schools and communities (*near term outcomes*).

Desired near-term results of the SS/HS grant activities consist of three closely related areas. The first of these three areas is the implementation of a 'comprehensive set of programs and activities' in scope (grant areas addressed). The second area is 'enhanced services' where grantees are expected to implement programs and activities that reflect best practices, including evidence-based programs and curricula. Finally, the area of 'coordination and service integration' refers to the expectation that agencies in a grantee community's system of youth development services will coordinate their planning, implementation, monitoring, and sustaining of activities.

Service integration is considered an essential feature of the SS/HS Initiative and is considered critical to achieving change in outcomes of individual students and families, as well as improved sustainability and school climate (Rollison & Hill, 2011). The model highlights factors that may affect the grantees' ability to break out of any existing organizational silos to better serve youth, as well as the ability of the resulting collaborative efforts to generate measurable improvements. For example, consistent with the Whelage and White paper (1995), grantees may improve information sharing between the school district and the local public mental health agency that can lead to greater numbers of students benefitting from mental health services.

Long-term outcomes in the program theory model are intended to reflect the successful achievement of the more immediate outcomes; they fall under the categories of reduced rates of youth problem behaviors, improved school climate, and indicators that the collaborative effort will be sustained following the end of the grant.

Guided by the Program Theory Model, the National Evaluation of the SS/HS Initiative seeks to address four overarching questions:

1. How do existing conditions and resources in the pre-grant environment moderate the relationships among grant operations and outcomes?
2. What SS/HS grant operation characteristics are associated with improvements in near-term and long-term outcomes?
3. What near-term outcomes are associated with improvements in long-term outcomes?
4. Overall, does the SS/HS Initiative meet the Federal Government's expectations of achieving improvements in long-term outcomes (reduction in substance use and violence, increased access to mental health services, and

improvement in school climate) and near-term outcomes (comprehensive programs and activities and improved coordination and service integration)?

The Program Theory Model, with its four domains (pre-grant environment, grant operations, near-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes), addresses factors that may affect both grantees' ability to break down organizational silos (based on evidence of the establishment of integrated structures for governance to better serve youth) and the ability of the resulting partnerships to generate measurable improvements. The model provides organization to this complex evaluation and theory to explain variations in grant operations and outcomes.

3. Implementing the Model in Data Definition and Collection

Developing a hypothetical program model was the first step in the use of the model for evaluation; the next step was to define the model elements with collectible data. The national evaluation of the SS/HS Initiative has faced numerous challenges in data definition and data collection. First, the environmental context varies noticeably across sites. It is essential for the national evaluation to consider contextual variation in assessing change in outcomes. Second, each community receiving a grant developed a comprehensive strategy that involves a unique combination of programs and activities designed to address local needs and to fit the local context. There is no set pattern of programs and implementation schedules to guide the selection of process measures and development of data collection schedules. Third, although some interventions are implemented in multiple sites, the timing of implementation varies according to the sites' plans. No single approach to data collection can overcome these challenges without imposing such extensive burdens of time and effort on the grantees that the cost effectiveness of the grant itself would be compromised.

The evaluation employs four main data collection methods to provide rich qualitative and quantitative information to test the program theory model while minimizing burden on grant stakeholders. The first is a review of publicly available data, such as school district profiles from the National Center for Education Statistics and community information from the American Communities Survey, grant applications, performance reports, and related materials. The evaluation team also conducts site visits, telephone interviews, and focus groups with project directors, grant partners, local evaluators, and other local stakeholders. Surveys of project directors and school-level staff at schools with SS/HS programs or services are administered online annually. Finally, the national evaluation relies on Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data reported by grantees on student outcomes related to substance use, physical fighting and safety, and access to school-based and community-based mental health services.

3.1 Data on pre-grant environment

SS/HS grant applications provide information about existing conditions and resources that are likely to shape the planning of the local project. These conditions and resources include history of collaborative relationships among the public schools and at least two of the following—public sector mental health, law enforcement, and/or juvenile justice. Additionally, the applications detail community characteristics such as population density or poverty statistics, system resources prior to the grant including existing investments to address youth needs (e.g., school-based health centers, evidence-based prevention programs already in place), and the role of grant funds in the school and community. Some resources may represent assets whose utilization can be improved through collaborative efforts.

3.2 Data on grant operations

The grant operations domain includes key attributes related to a partnership's structure and function, measured primarily through site visits, telephone interviews, and focus groups. The SS/HS Initiative is designed to encourage collaboration among agencies and organizations whose programs and services can affect youth outcomes (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009; Weiss, Anderson, & Lasker, 2002). Collaboration is not guaranteed by the partnership structure: agencies and organizations may cooperate in planning and implementation without a formal structure, or they may operate independently despite being linked by a formal partnership. Effective functioning can be influenced by such factors as partner involvement, communication, and decision-making structure (Feinberg, Greenberg, & Osgood, 2004; Kegler, M. C., Williams, Cassell, Santelli, Kegler, R. R., et al., 2005; Kegler, Steckler, McLeroy, & Malek, 1998). In addition, changes within the community's system, defined here as the operating environment, are also taken into account as predictors of near- and long-term outcomes. For example, challenges experienced during the planning stages or barriers to collaboration during implementation may negatively impact a grantee's outcomes.

3.3 Data on outcomes

Given the multifaceted nature of this initiative, a range of outcomes are anticipated at varying levels. Data on behavioral changes in students are measured and collected by individual grantees and reported in summary form. Data include measures of past 30-day substance use, physical fighting, witnessed violence, feelings of safety, and numbers served or referred to mental health services. These data are most often available at grade or institutional level rather than individual level, in part due to local data-sharing agreements. The national evaluation compares change across grantees and by school type to assess the impact of such factors as grantee partnership structure, population density, and improved coordination and service

integration on long-term outcomes. At the community and school levels, data on school climate are used in the form of overall scores and subscale scores for perceptions of student risk/problem behaviors, student and staff safety, and availability of health and counseling services. As with outcome measures, results from the School Climate Survey are used as quantifiable evidence of improvement in the intended long-term outcomes of the SS/HS Initiative and as a means of exploring potential relationships between these outcomes and relevant characteristics of the grantees and their schools. In addition, school personnel perceptions of the extent to which the SS/HS project has helped their school increase safety, reduce violence and substance abuse, and accomplish other grant objectives will also be used in assessing improvements in school climate.

Progress towards sustainability represents a long-term outcome of critical importance. The SS/HS Initiative anticipates that grantees will be committed to sustaining programs and outcomes beyond the grant period. The national evaluation uses indicators of development in the area of sustainability such as the establishment of a local reputation for effectiveness or identification of funding/resources to continue enhanced services to create a comparative rating scale of apparent sustainability. This scale is used in turn as evidence of sustainability of the innovations achieved locally and as a means of exploring potential relationships between sustainability and relevant characteristics of the grantees and their schools.

4. Applying the Program Theory Model to Data Analysis

The program theory model has also served as the basis for developing the analysis plan in the evaluation. As noted in Rossi et al. (2004), the articulation of the program theory must be in a form amenable to analysis. Therefore, for this evaluation, data analyses follow a staged analytic framework exploring distributional characteristics of each variable measure, followed by bivariate relationships to refine variable selection, followed by selected regressions, and finally

multilevel modeling. This approach facilitates discussion of the relative import and sequencing of independent variables on near- and long-term dependent variables. The multilevel modeling helps determine whether constructs such as ‘comprehensive programs and activities’ or ‘partnership functioning’ affect school staff perceptions of improvements in different grant areas by addressing the nested nature of the data, such as schools nested within SS/HS grant recipients (Gelman, 2006). The meta-regression analysis focuses on meta-analyzed data related to changes in students’ alcohol and drug use, access to school- and community-based mental health services, and student reports of experience with violence and perceptions of school safety as the dependent variable.

Qualitative methods supplement and enhance the quantitative methods by producing rich descriptive information on grantees and their operations. Qualitative analysis of data occurs in stages relative to data collection. Open coding is used to categorize the data according to major themes that emerge. Once codes are established, data for each site are reviewed, and the presence of a code (activity) is counted for each site as a means of quantifying the qualitative data. It is important to note that this is not possible for all constructs as information varies in quality and consistency.

With this approach, the qualitative analysis attempts to ascertain patterns or relationships across sites to determine whether they extend beyond individual sites and generalize to some degree across others. Matrices—crossing these hypothetical relations with all SS/HS sites—represent one common display mechanism for detecting generalizable patterns. The use of cross-site matrices allows analysts to organize qualitative observations in an ordinal array, such as ‘low’, ‘medium’, and ‘high’ on a wide variety of variables. Assignment of ordinal values permits

the narrative-based qualitative observations to be employed in statistical analyses, including summative and cross-site analyses.

Several examples illustrate how the data analysis thus far validates the use of the program theory model. These types of analytical findings, although still preliminary, can facilitate improvement in the provision of SS/HS services and the Initiative as a whole.

1. Variation in the organizational configuration of partnerships among SS/HS sites reveal that decentralized partnership structures are associated with a greater number of coordination and service integration activities, a key near-term outcome. The partnership functioning measure is also associated with a greater number of coordination and service integration activities as well as with a higher level of perceived improvements by school staff in grant areas and greater progress toward sustainability. Evaluation findings also revealed that sites where schools were more involved in making decisions about the grant had a greater number of implemented, enhanced SS/HS programs and services.
2. There were significant annual increases in the mean number of implemented programs and activities across different grant element areas and in the mean number of coordination and service integration activities in the 2005 and 2006 cohorts. The use of enhanced services (defined in this context as implementing evidence-based programs) also steadily and significantly increased over time from the first year of the grant.
3. The implementation of comprehensive programs and activities was found to be a significant predictor of initial increases in school staff perceptions of improvement across all grant areas. Results across 12 GPRA outcomes measures

for the 2005 cohort were generally positive. Specifically, changes in 6 of the 12 outcomes between Year 1 and Year 3 for 2005 cohort grantees were positive and statistically significant (past 30-day use of tobacco, experienced and witnessed violence, receipt of school or community mental health services, and school attendance). The national evaluation also identified significant increases in staff perceptions of improvement in the schools in terms of decreasing substance use, decreasing violence, improving early childhood development services, and improving access to mental health services.

4. Grantees also showed progress toward sustainability, with all of the 2005 grantees reporting that they had developed a sustainability plan and more than one-half reporting that financial support from other agencies had been formalized in the agencies' line-item budgets by the last year of funding.

Not all relationships in the Program Theory Model have yet been examined in detail; efforts are being made to better operationalize measures. Increased cohorts of grantees will also provide a greater sample size to allow making better inferences about the relationships in the model. Interaction effects may also emerge and complicate the directionality proposed in the model. However, initial findings are encouraging and support the continued use of the program theory model.

5. Lessons Learned

Based on more than five years of experience, the national evaluation team of the SS/HS Initiative has a practical understanding of the challenges that can be encountered during data collection and analysis for such a large, complex project. If not anticipated and managed

effectively, these challenges can undermine efforts to accomplish the objectives of the evaluation.

5.1 Diversity of program implementation

The national cross-site evaluation encompasses multiple cohorts of grantees. Grantees in each cohort generally represent urban, rural, suburban, and tribal grantees, yet the sizes and identified community needs vary widely. Although the SS/HS Initiative requires each grant recipient to address all six issue areas—safe school environments and violence prevention; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention; student behavioral, social, and emotional supports; mental health services; safe school policies; and/or early childhood social and emotional learning—a wide diversity of needs and programs can comply with this requirement. In their grant applications, grantees identify one or more locally important challenges to creating and/or maintaining safe environments and healthy development for students. This means that the specific mix of interventions at each site differs due to environmental context. Attempting to capture these complexities through a program theory model has been extremely challenging.

The program theory-driven evaluation design overcomes this challenge in two ways. The first is by concentrating on the common qualitative issues of capacity building and change in implementation practices in the program theory model that transcend the site-specific content of youth-related programming. For example, increased coordination and service integration are critical for any system attempting to “de-silo” approaches to support students, regardless of whether the focus is on increasing access to mental health services or building an interdisciplinary team to address safety issues in school. The second is by capitalizing on the opportunity for each site to identify program goals that are locally important and that can potentially be incorporated into the national evaluation. For example, grantees are encouraged

through their local evaluations to develop strong measures of improvement in other student outcome areas in the grant, such as perceptions of risk or harm of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The national evaluation collects and analyzes this information where possible to provide a more complete picture of the Initiative as a whole.

5.2 Lack of comparison group

The national cross-site evaluation is not experimental research. Without a control group from which to collect comparison data, the analytic design must employ a one-group pre- and post-test design to generate meaningful evidence of the effectiveness of this innovative grant strategy. Within-group analytic designs can be methodologically rigorous but require more sophistication than simple time-by-condition comparisons.

The national evaluation has documented several significant improvements and relatively few declines in youth outcomes among the grantees during the years examined. Because the national evaluation lacks comparison data, it cannot be conclusively established that changes in outcome behaviors can be attributed to the SS/HS Initiative. Nevertheless, concurrent national trend data from sources such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey have shown no significant change since 2005 in 30-day alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Additionally, there were no significant changes nationally in the percentage of 9th- to 12th-grade students who experienced violence (were in a physical fight) or perceived violence (felt unsafe at school) between 2005 and 2007 (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2008). The absence of concurrent improvements in youth outcomes in national data suggests strongly that the observed outcomes in youth behaviors among SS/HS grantees cannot be ascribed to national trends.

5.3 *Varying program requirements*

Changes to grant requirements can make comparing cohorts challenging. For example, while the 2005 and 2006 cohorts had similar grant requirements, the 2007, 2008, and 2009 cohorts received additional guidance on key topics, such as greater specificity in required GPRA reporting measures, requiring baseline data for all GPRA measures, and requiring a “Core Management Team” for partnerships comprised of organizational leaders as part of the day-to-day management of the Initiative. In addition, the number of element areas grantees were required to address changed from six to five, with slight variations within elements. While these changes were perceived as positive for the Initiative, they presented challenges for data analysis across grantees of successive cohorts. These challenges were resolved by reliance on meta-analytic techniques for the GPRA data, refinement of the evaluation measure of partnership organization to account for the innovation of Core Management Teams, and grouping grant activities into topical areas rather than element areas to facilitate comparison of activities across cohorts. As a result, these varying program requirements did not impact the underlying program theory model, thus providing evidence of its robustness in guiding the evaluation.

In general, evaluation design and analytic challenges were met by refocusing on the theoretical underpinnings of the Initiative reflected in the program theory model and the research questions. This sometimes required refinements to measures of constructs within the program theory model or changes to grouping of constructs, but this flexibility provided a stronger model for the evaluation. Similar to other evaluations with similar content, a key to this process was the involvement of major program stakeholders in the initial development stage of the model and their continued involvement throughout the evaluation cycle (Hill & Thies, 2010).

6. Conclusion

The program theory model developed at the beginning of the national evaluation of the SS/HS Initiative and refined over time has proven invaluable in guiding the evaluation design and analysis. In addition to its continued use in the ongoing evaluation of the grant program, preliminary findings from this evaluation effectively assist grantees and policymakers in making data-driven program and policy decisions and in communicating the initiative's successes to the public.

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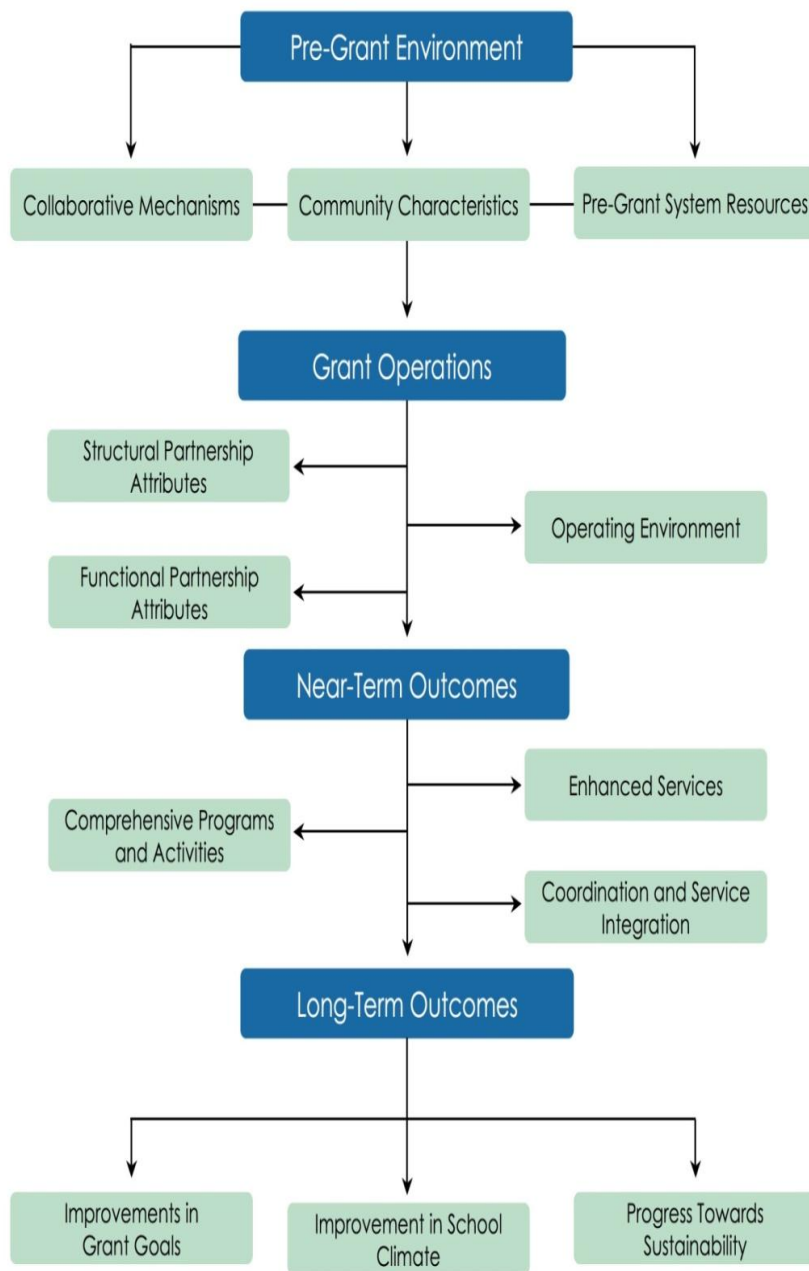
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Figure 1. Program Theory Model



Author Vitae

Julia Rollison, M.P.H., currently serves as the Deputy Project Director at MANILA Consulting Group, Inc., for the national cross-site evaluation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. She manages quantitative and qualitative data collection and coordinates data analysis efforts on key outcome measures, specifically those associated with GPRA requirements. She is responsible for ensuring the quality and integrity of data collected and creating and maintaining cross-site data repositories. Ms. Rollison has expertise in program evaluation and performance measurement from past evaluations, such as the 5-year, multicity study on the outcomes of financing and organizing after-school activities by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the cross-site evaluations of 35 initiatives for SAMHSA's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Center for Excellence.

Gary Hill, Ph.D., of MANILA Consulting Group, Inc., has nearly 40 years of increasing responsibility in the fields of health policy, program evaluation, project management, and the design and development of automated information systems. He currently serves as the Project Director for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students national cross-site evaluation. Previously, Dr. Hill was Division Director at a large federal government contracting firm, overseeing contracts providing, for example, program evaluation, cost-benefit analyses, and reports to Congress. Dr. Hill was the Project Director for the evaluation of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's After School Program. He was also the Project Director for the Department of State's International Demand Reduction Program, a \$15 million, multiyear effort designed to coordinate the implementation and evaluation of prevention programs across the world.

Ping Yu, Ph.D., of Battelle Centers for Public Health Research and Evaluation, has more than 25 years of experience in community- and school-based substance abuse research, domestic and international program evaluation, and management of large-scale, multi-year, and multi-million-dollar projects. He currently serves as the Project Director for Battelle on the national evaluation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Dr. Yu has managed a portfolio of research and evaluation projects worth more than \$60 million across a wide range of government and private sector clients. He has designed and directed a number of large-scale studies that use both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of community- and school-based prevention or treatment initiatives. Dr. Yu's contributions have received broad peer recognition in the form of published articles and participation in such forums as the National Committee on Asian and Pacific Islander Americans Health Research convened by the Director of Minority Health at the National Institutes of Health.

Steven Murray, Ph.D., is the Subcontract Director at RMC Research Corporation for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students national evaluation and has served in this capacity for over 5 years. Dr. Murray has devoted his professional career to improving the quality of educational and social services through policy analysis, research and evaluation, and technical assistance. Currently, Dr. Murray is a key staff member on four large-scale studies that contribute to the field-testing of research-based programs to improve education. Prior to joining RMC, Dr. Murray directed evaluation projects for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.